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Housekeepers' Chat — Thursday, April 18, 1929.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Campaigning Against Dangerous Summer Pests." Prepared by J. L. Webb, Bureau of Entomology, U. S. D.A.

--ooOoo--

"Aunt Sammy," called my Next-Door-Neighbor the other day, in agitated accents, "what would you do if you found that your favorite cat had fleas? Topaz is such a smart cat, too -- I don't see how she ever got them. What shall I do about it, Aunt Sammy? Do you know what to do for fleas on cats?"

"No," I replied. "I'm sorry to say that fleas are out of my line. Now if you want a recipe for beefsteak pie -- "

"But I don't!" said my Neighbor. "I want to know how to get rid of fleas. Where can I get the information? And before the picnic season starts, I want a remedy for chigger bites. I'm serious, Aunt Sammy. What shall I do?"

Well, when I realized that she really was serious, I called on a friend of mine in the Bureau of Entomology, and asked his advice.

"Mr. Webb," I said, "would you mind writing me a talk on 'Dangerous Summer Pests?' I'll read it for you -- all you have to do is write it. Is that a bargain?"

My friend agreed to my terms, and here's the talk he wrote for us on "Dangerous Summer Pests:"

With the approach of spring, and the appearance of the first warm balmy days of the season, some poetic soul is sure to feel an urge to tell the world once more how all nature is awaking, and how wonderful it is. Ten to one he then goes out and sitson a park bench, to commune with the lady of his choice, and a mosquito lights on his ear and fills his system with malaria. We live to learn that Nature is a capricious mistress, and like many others of the sex, often shows a temperament which we are not so enthusiastic about.

Now and then we get uncomfortably close to Nature in our homes, or rather, nature comes close to us. It won't be long now until house flies begin to appear and we shall behold the familiar spectacle of this potential disease carrier daintily sipping from the cream pitcher or picking its way tentatively across the sugar bowl. When you see the first one, get out your swatter and swat; and keep on swatting as later ones appear. See that your screens are in good condition, and if there is any manure or refuse on your premises in which flies can breed, see that it is removed and that subsequent clean-ups are made twice a week throughout the summer.

Most of us like cats and dogs. As a matter of fact, there must be something radically wrong with anyone who doesn't. And yet, this liking for our pets often leads to unpleasant manifestations of nature's working. Some fine morning the housewife goes down into the basement, where the cat has been sleeping, and beats a hasty retreat with fleas all over her stockings.

And do the stockings afford protection from the bites of the hungry fleas? No, no, Nanette, stockings nowadays are not made for such purposes! The idea! So when this happens to you, dust the fur of the cat, especially along the back and top of the head, with derris or fresh pyrethrum powder, provide comfortable outdoor sleeping quarters for her, and make her sleep there. Next, get a small force spray pump, preferably a bucket pump, and spray the entire basement floor with creosote oil. If you find fleas on the upper floors, the floors may be sprayed with fly spray! Next sprinkle naphthalene flakes over the floors of one or two rooms (enough to make the floor white) and leave the doors and windows of these rooms tightly closed for twenty-four hours. At the end of this period the naphthalene may be swept into another room for similar treatment. If the cat is allowed to come in the house at all, dust the fur regularly with derris or pyrethrum powder. If your particular pet happens to be a dog we understand of course that he is a nice clean dog and almost human -- but just the same, use the same precautions we have just given you in regard to the cat. The sleeping quarters of cats and dogs should be frequently sprayed with creosote oil, in order to destroy any fleas which may be breeding there.

During the midsummer, those of us who like to ramble in the woods and get near to nature's heart frequently have cause to remark on the hardness of that organ. How often have we, as enthusiastic nature lovers, fared forth with a song upon our lips, shouting the praises of the glorious summer day! Perhaps we found a blackberry patch, and stopped to eat a few of the berries. Oh boy, but they were good, and nature was truly wonderful! Then at the end of a long hike, bedraggled and weary, we have turned our footsteps homeward in expectation of blissful repose. Strangely enough, our nether extremities began to itch and burn, and upon taking off our stockings we found our legs covered with red spots. And the more we rubbed the more they smarted. Ain't nature wonderful? And then, we remembered the blackberry patch and the fact that chiggers are supposed to breed there. Now if we had known a little more of the manner in which nature works, we would have sprinkled sulphur inside our stockings and underwear before starting out, and nature would not have been quite so active and intimate with us. Certain aspects of nature intrigue us more when viewed from a distance. A proper perspective must be maintained.

In some parts of the country mosquitoes are troublesome household pests. As in the case of the house fly, thorough screening of the house is necessary, and the wire used should be 16 or 18 inch mesh. If mosquitoes do get into the house, examine the inside of the windows early in the morning, and kill all mosquitoes found, either by swatting, or better, with a fly spray. Oil of citronella has some value as a repellent, if sprinkled on the bed at night and rubbed on exposed parts of the body.

For real control of mosquitoes, treat the places where they breed. This is usually a community project, and we should aid in every way possible in securing the drainage or oiling of pools and swampy places which constitute a menace to the health and comfort of the community. In cases where small accumulations of water exist on individual premises, these should be eliminated or treated. See that there are no tin cans or crockery which contain water on the place and examine the eave troughs of your house to see that the rain water flows out readily. Occasionally they become clogged and water is backed up in them and held long enough to breed mosquitoes.

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This concludes Mr. Webb's talk on "Dangerous Summer Pests." I enjoyed reading it, and I hope he'll write us another some day.

Tomorrow, please have your pencils and Radio Records handy, for I do want you to have my recipe for Beefsteak pie. There's a recipe for Orange and Honey sauce, too, which is to be served on Ice cream. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow.

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Friday: "A Sunday Dinner Menu."

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